

Are all bankruptcy attorneys created equal (#3)?

It came to my attention last week that a bankruptcy judge recently told the client of a bankruptcy attorney to **get another attorney**. Why? Because **the original attorney had not shown up for the client's hearing and left the client alone before the judge**.

Why am I writing about this here? Because **you, as a prospective client for a bankruptcy attorney, have no direct way to know about something like this**. There have not yet been sanctions imposed by the judge against this attorney and certainly no discipline by the state bar (which requires worse behavior and/or over a long period of time). I've written previously about how important it is to choose your bankruptcy attorney wisely, and I feel the need to write more about it here.

Would you want to choose an attorney about whom a bankruptcy judge said the following? **"the court notes that ... fees are lower than the average fees... However, that is counterbalanced by general lack of ability; ... clients do not get more than they pay for."**

How are you to protect yourself from choosing one of the "bad apples"? Of course this question applies to far more than bankruptcy attorneys, but that's the subject we're dealing with right now. Here are some suggestions:

1. **Read "between the lines"** on a bankruptcy attorney's website. What does that mean?
 - **Does the site give you a good feel for who this attorney is**, how he or she thinks about clients, and how the attorney would go about the work of handling your case? Can you get a good feel for who the attorney really is from their website?
 - **Does the site demonstrate, not just tell you**, that the attorney is skilled in the practice of bankruptcy law?
2. **Use internet search engines** (can you say "Google") to search for an **attorney's name** and **"sanctions"**, **"motion to review fees"**, and **"motion for review of fees"**. Use quote marks as shown in **three separate searches**.
3. Again using Google, **search for an attorney's name appearing on the site leagle.com**. You do this by entering into Google the following:

attorney name site:leagle.com

Note that not all material on leagle.com is about bad attorney behavior, far from it. It's just that this site seems to produce cases involving attorney discipline that do not appear from other sources such as court websites.

That's certainly not perfect, but it seems to be the best we have.

You'll note that I didn't include Yelp or other rating sites in the above list. Why not? Because it's far too easy for an unhappy-for-some-reason person to slam an attorney (or anyone or any business) on those sites. It can almost become a game. But when a judge does it to an attorney, you know there's something to it. And the court cases you find will explain in detail the actions that caused the judge's decision.

As I closed my prior articles on this subject...

What's the moral of this story? Be very careful out there when choosing a bankruptcy attorney.

Are all bankruptcy attorneys created equal?

Are all bankruptcy attorneys created equal (#2)?

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